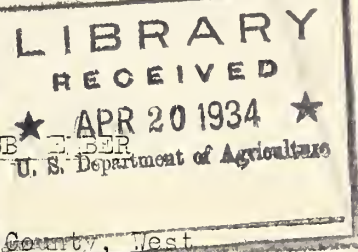


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OUR POULTRY FLOCK HAS IMPROVED SINCE I BECAME A 4-H CLUB MEMBER



A radio talk by Helen Saville, 4-H club girl, Hampshire County, West Virginia, delivered in the 4-H Club program, National Farm and Home Hour, Saturday, April 7, 1934, and broadcast by a network of 58 associate NBC radio stations.

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Upon the recommendation of my county agent, in the spring of 1930 I purchased for my 4-H club project two hundred purebred Barred Rock baby chicks. This was something new for our farm as we had never raised any purebred chickens before. It was the beginning of our improved poultry flock.

It was my first year of club work and this seemed like a big undertaking, but my project circular gave definite instructions as to how I should carry on the work and my county agent helped me apply these instructions. Since I had thought of undertaking better poultry work the summer before we had built a new brooder house which proved to be a valuable asset in my new work.

My chicks were two weeks old when I received them, and as I had never had any experience with a brooder and feeding mashers I followed the suggestion in my project circular very carefully. At first the sanitary hoppers which I used seemed difficult to work with but after a couple weeks' experience they seemed much easier to handle and I found that it was a much better way to feed chickens, than the old methods to which I had been accustomed. I found that by cleaning the brooder house every day or so and by keeping the feed hoppers and drinking fountains clean I could keep my chicks healthy, and by so doing I was able to raise 175 of the 200.

As soon as the weather was suitable I allowed them to be out on clean ground, and at first used small mesh poultry netting for a pen to keep them from ranging all over the orchard. Later I gave them free range. During the summer they grew rapidly and showed no sign of disease.

In the fall when it was time for the county fair I had my first experience in choosing the better chickens from my flock. By following the directions given in the project circular I was successful in choosing birds that won first at our county exhibit and third at the regional fair.

When enrollment time came again I decided, with the advice of my county agent, to continue with second year poultry. That year I had to make some changes in the housing of my pullets. By converting one end of the barn into a chicken house we had sufficient room to build nests, make a roost, and still have space enough to scatter litter where the hens could scratch. After they had been laying a few months I had them blood-tested so that I could sell the eggs for hatching. I found that by selling my eggs for hatching I made more money than by selling them for food.

When exhibit time came around again and I had to choose my chickens for the show, I was better qualified to make the selection and I won first place at both the county exhibit and the regional fair. Winning first place at regional fair entitled me to a free trip to Jackson's Mill, the State 4-H Camp.

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This success, together with the advice from my county agent and my own ambition to improve our poultry flock at home encouraged me to go on with my poultry project.

At the beginning of the third year I had my chickens culled and sold those that were not laying. During this year we increased our flock by purchasing more baby chicks and hatching quite a few with our own hens.

During these three years my mother and father have taken a great deal of interest in poultry project work. Until I started my poultry project the chickens on our farm had been a mixture of general breeds and, like the birds of most farm flocks, our hens had to shift for themselves without much care except a little feed morning and evening. With the coming of my flock we began using better methods, such as sanitary feeders and fountains, and keeping the houses sanitary. We also learned much more about diseases, and how to prevent them.

We have improved our housing conditions as well as our flock, which has necessitated extra expense, but by giving the birds proper care we had eggs to sell during the winter months when prices were good, and because of having a good purebred flock and having it bloodtested so that we could sell eggs for hatching in the spring, we have actually cleared above all expenses a good net profit.

The profits we made during the past year have been invested in more baby chicks and in improving conditions for poultry on our farm. We are very proud of our flock now as compared to the one we had before I started on my 4-H project.